

Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) 2005 Update
Summary Notes from the WTP Commission Team September and October 2005
Visits with the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) and the
Tribal Transportation Planning Organization (TTPO)

INTRODUCTION:

The following Summary Notes capture the feedback from the Washington State Transportation Commission WTP Team Visits with Regional Transportation Planning Organizations and the San Juan County Commissioners held in September and October 2005. The Team also held a listening session with the TTPO and those notes are attached too.

Held locally with the regional organizations, these meetings followed the same basic agenda. Each began with an introduction to the geography of the region and how transportation plays a key role in the regional economies. Most Organizations shared wall maps and some had handouts to illustrate their needs and the current condition of their infrastructure.

At each meeting a recap of the current status of the WTP helped to orient the participants. Some had more questions about the timeline and the process, while others were eager to jump into the discussion about regional priorities and addressing the handout materials. These meetings mark the period of time right before the prioritization process begins as an opportunity for the Commissioners to better understand the differences among the regions as well as the similarities.

The influence of the WTP's "Early Learnings" upon the action by the 2005 Legislature during the early part of the WTP's Phase II resulted in a significant funding package. The RTPO meetings centered on how to propose priorities after such substantial legislative action occurred. Each meeting recapped the new duties and role of the Commission. Most focused heavily upon a variety of regional issues.

WTP Commission Team Members: Dale Stedman, Dan O'Neal, and Bob Distler

The purpose of the meetings targeted listening to the RTPO perspectives on:

- the WTP process;
- the region specific transportation issues and needs; and
- how the WTP can set a meaningful statewide transportation vision for the next twenty years.

Altogether in 16 visits (14 RTPOs, the San Juan County Commissioners, and the TTPO), the Commission Team heard from over 60 people in these organizations, not including WSDOT staff who attended some of the meetings. The Tribal Transportation Planning organization listening session was held in conjunction with the State WSDOT Tribal Conference. Approximately 42 individuals participated in this event, which included representatives from tribal, federal, state and private organizations. The following notes are in chronological order as they occurred this fall.

Organization Name	Date of Visit	Commissioner(s) Attending	Page #
Spokane Regional Transportation Council	Sep. 13, 2005	Dale Stedman	3
Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Sep. 13, 2005	Dale Stedman	6
Thurston Regional Planning Council	Sep. 15, 2005	Dan O'Neal	8
Yakima Valley Conference of Governments	Sep. 22, 2005	Dale Stedman	10
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council	Sep. 22, 2005	Bob Distler	12
Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council	Sep. 22, 2005	Dale Stedman	14
Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Oct. 6, 2005	Dale Stedman	16
Puget Sound Regional Council	Oct. 10, 2005	Bob Distler	18
Skagit/Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Oct. 11, 2005	Bob Distler	20
San Juan County Commissioners	Oct. 12, 2005	Bob Distler	22
QuadCo Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Oct. 14, 2005	Dale Stedman	24
Tribal Transportation Planning Organization	Oct. 17, 2005	Dale Stedman Bob Distler Dan O'Neal Ed Barnes Dick Ford	26
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments	Oct. 20, 2005	Dale Stedman	28
Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization	Oct. 21, 2005	Dan O'Neal Dale Stedman	30
Whatcom Council of Governments	Oct. 24, 2005	Bob Distler	32
Benton-Franklin Council of Governments	Oct. 25, 2005	Dale Stedman	34

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH SPOKANE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (SRTC)

September 13, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Glenn Miles, Transportation Manager, Spokane Regional Transportation Council
Dale Stedman, Commissioner, Washington State Transportation Commission
Judy Lorenzo, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dale provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked Glenn in advance for his time. Judy recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials. Glenn stated that he didn't find the layout of the information in the handouts very useful or meaningful.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Glenn shared that he felt there are both structural and institutional issues related to the WTP. He did not like the use of projects in the handouts or presentations, even if they were intended to illustrate a "type" of project, such as the specific list of freight projects included in several documents. This is because they often become the list as opposed to a list of examples.

Glenn also added that he didn't think there really was a WTP, a plan that sets a statewide vision with good policy statements. He believes that the WTP products, materials and messages reflect WSDOT staff biases rather than statewide transportation interests at all levels of government. He added later that the findings of the WTP update process should result in something that can be implemented. The policies for Aviation, Rail and all modes should be clearly stated.

Spokane County has a north-south freight issue that is not recognized in the current WSDOT analysis and expressed a need to correct the fact that it is ignored in the current materials. He felt WSDOT staff should follow policy level messages and not send mixed messages.

The lack of a policy level discussion is unfortunate; in that it should have happen first, not mid-way through the update process.

Glenn encouraged the Commission to establish clear and yet general policy statements for the plan. He mentioned the KISS concept (Keep it Simple Stupid). Glenn suggested the Commission create benchmarks in creating a plan that says how much money it should take to achieve a stated or desired percentage of the goal.

"How will the WTP help address what is important to the Spokane Region?"

Highways of Statewide Significance should be paid for by the state.

When asked, “What are your top six policy ideas to include in the plan?” the following responses were given:

Providing Basic Transportation Capacity

For example the policy could read, “*Urban areas should have basic urban freeways connecting to all state highways (such as four-lane divided highways).*”

Interstate traffic should focus on intra-state and interstate travel and commerce for deliveries to the local community. A discussion ensued about the design issues surrounding this topic and the need for using specific standards as an example.

Freight Congestion

Spokane has 72 at-grade rail crossings of streets and roads. Improvements on the local system are important. How can the local system continue to handle these delays? Glenn mentioned that at these crossings there is a \$100.00 per hour per truck delay cost. He felt that people assume that there is funding set aside for the “bridging the valley” zero grade crossings effort. This is not necessarily true.

Preserving Transcontinental Movement

The issue of roadway design within an urban area has implications to efficient truck/freight movement. Glenn shared multiple local examples of how lack of continuity in turn movement design results in torn up sidewalks, crashes, and unwanted travel delay.

Glenn pointed out that the ability to get design practices synthesized amongst locals is a challenge. The agencies that provide funding for downtown improvements don’t require the same standards.

In addition, building designs for receiving areas are not feasible with the current street network. Developers and the permitting agencies should evaluate the impact deliveries to businesses have on traffic circulation in the downtown area. Deliveries could be restricted to nighttime or businesses should establish a loading dock area, rather than continue to park in the middle of the street during the day.

Glenn noted that he thinks it would be beneficial statewide for someone/entity to do a genuine benefit-cost analysis and compare rail investment to roadway investment. Long-haul trucks are making local deliveries.

The Bottlenecks and Chokepoints study should address multiple ways to measure performance, such as increased efficiencies, quantifying the cost per ton-mile and compare that with producer concerns about delivery cost and market price.

Ask the question: “On the public facility, what’s the best use of taxpayer funds?”

Safety

Focus efforts on using better designs, doing a better job to educate drivers, and increase enforcement. Aggressive driving and inattentive driving are statewide concerns that are common in the Spokane Region as well.

Better designs and the addition of truck passing lanes help reduce the number of vehicles being impeded by a slower driver or truck. There is also a railroad bridge in Spokane that crosses over a major arterial. It is one of the highest collision locations in the urban area. Unfortunately the cost to replace the structure is estimated to be at least \$20 million. Because it serves the private rail company the benefit-cost ratio will never result in securing adequate funding to build a new bridge.

Public Transportation

The policy could read: "Urban areas should plan for high capacity transit."

The Spokane Regional Transportation Council is co-located in the Multimodal Center in Spokane. The SRTC has a great working relationship with the Spokane Transit Authority, performing planning services for them. They collaborate on peer reviews and subcommittees.

The issue of increasing gas prices was discussed and the RTPPO was interested in knowing what dollar amount would cause drivers to change their travel patterns and use transit or other Commute Trip Reduction options. Establishing light rail between Spokane Valley and downtown Spokane and potentially Coeur D'Alene and Liberty Lake are ideas that are a part of the ongoing regional conversation. This 11-mile corridor has an estimated 1.4 billion dollar price tag. This price was for the North Spokane Corridor. The Light Rail Project varies between 200 and 600 million for 16 miles.

Spokane has an aggressive "dial-a-ride" program, with a growing population that is aging.

Glenn shared a success story from Idaho, where the SRTC also provides planning services to Kootenai County. The project involved expanded private bus service developed by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to multiple locations for multiple trip purposes, not just to get to and from their casino. The partnership allowed for Federal Transit Administration funds to be leveraged to purchase and operate new larger buses for the local communities.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

This is another important issue for the Spokane region. An informed public allows for transportation system expectations to change. For example if a traveler knows well in advance of arriving in Ellensburg that Snoqualmie is closed or experiencing bad weather conditions, then a choice can be made to either go south to the Columbia River or over White Pass or north over Stevens Pass. ITS in several key places in eastern Washington would benefit freight and the average taxpayer with significantly less short-term investment.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH NORTHEAST WASHINGTON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (N.E.W. RTPO)

September 13, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Jeni Forman, Executive Director, Northeast Washington RTPO
Josh Hall, Pend Oreille EDS, Tri-County Economic Development Council
Dale Stedman, Commissioner, Washington State Transportation Commission
Mark Rohwer, Transportation Planning Manager, WSDOT Eastern Region
Judy Lorenzo, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Over lunch the group discussed the beginnings of the WTP Phase I process to orient Josh Hall, who was enjoying his first day on the job with the Economic Development District.

Dale provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked Jeni in advance for her time. Judy recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials. Jeni thanked Commissioner Stedman for coming out to see the RTPOs and said that they appreciated the opportunity to share their views.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Process

Last fall the RTPOs filled out forms on their interest in participating in the development of the WTP issue areas. They provided the following questions and comments: “What ever happened to those lists?” “We spent a lot of time with our Policy Board on deciding which issues we cared about the most and who wanted to participate.” “We don’t feel we were offered the opportunity to participate in those areas as they moved forward in the process. “It’s really great to have the Commission represented here for this meeting today.” “We have a good working relationship with the Eastern Region Office of WSDOT.”

Issues

Judy asked Jeni to share what she thought the WTP should be, how it should be written to reflect issues that are important to the Tri-County Region. “What are your top policy ideas to include in the plan?”

The following are the responses Jeni shared to this question:

All Weather Roads

Without these roads our economy is shut down for months.

Freight – A North-South Trade Corridor with Canada

SR 395 is an important route for northeast Washington. If it can't be listed as a major north-south freight corridor maybe it should be included as part of the economy discussion. It provides statewide benefits and may offer an opportunity for the state to relieve some of the capacity issues on the west side border crossings. It is more than just a freight corridor because it has significant preservation and safety issues and needs. They would like the Commission to consider expansion of this corridor as a future vision for the WTP.

Shortline Rail

There is currently a shortline rail loss pending – Danville to Republic. They have filed for abandonment. When the NEW RTPO contacted the WSDOT to ask for support to keep the rail line, WSDOT was not able to assist. This is a direct tie-in to the current WTP Rail Study that the Transportation Commission is conducting. N.E.W RTPO would like to be kept informed of the study as it progresses so it can provide comments.

Notes from the July 2005 Freight Summit were requested. *(These have been provided to the RTPO.)*

Transportation Access

People from Colville and points north also rely upon SR395 to get to medical appointments in Spokane.

Regional Airport Concepts

Federal Aviation Administration informed Colville that until the locals support a new airport or expansion it would not provide support. The existing airport is in a tough geographic location. Having adequate airport service for medical emergencies and fire drops for the forests is critical to this region. In the long term, air freight transportation could be critical to the economy of the region as well.

Healthy Communities

As a last point the RTPO shared that bike and pedestrian issues and projects are important to them for healthy living. They are working on a trail system and other ideas like destination biking. They are interested in diversifying the population to support the workforce so business will want to locate in the region.

Tribes

The RTPO has a good working relationship with the Colville, Kalispell, and the Spokane Tribes. Jeni makes a practice of going to the Colville Tribe to keep them in the loop on regional economic development and transportation activities and issues the RTPO is addressing.

Other

The road to the recreational area called "49 Degrees North" is a county road that is in need of repair and better standards. This is in progress but needs to continue, as 49 Degrees North becomes Stevens County's first master planned development.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH THURSTON REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL (TRPC)

September 15, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Lon Wyrick, Executive Director, Thurston Regional Planning Council
Thera Black, Senior Planner, Thurston Regional Planning Council
Dan O’Neal, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Bob Jones, Olympic Region Planning Manager, WSDOT
Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

After introductions, Lon and Thera provided a background description of the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC), making these points:

- A single-county regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) and metropolitan planning organization (MPO) whose voluntary membership includes the county, all the cities and towns in the county, tribes, and major employers among others
- Partly funded from annual assessments paid by its members
- No taxing authority
- Conducts planning projects for these members on transportation issues, but also other topics including growth patterns and conducting the public involvement for a county jail facility
- Provides the regional table around which cross-jurisdictional discussions occur; provides a neutral facilitation role
- The organization began in 1967 as a council of governments—local elected officials voluntarily came together and created the organization as a way to think about and figure out the county’s growth issues (triggered by the siting of The Evergreen State College outside the City of Olympia).

The organization functions and operates as one entity—with little or no distinction between its role as a metropolitan planning organization and regional transportation planning organization. TRPC also closely works with adjacent organizations, depending on the planning project or study, like the Puget Sound Regional Council, Grays Harbor Council of Governments, the Southwest Washington RTPO (Lewis and Grays Harbor counties are members there), and the Peninsula RTPO (Mason County is a member there).

Lon described a unique feature of TRPC—because Olympia is the seat of state government and of county government, most of TRPC’s membership is made up of government officials who understand how government works. The elected official members who understand the land use-transportation connection drove TRPC’s Vision Reality Study.

– RTPPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Transportation issues are closely linked to land use decisions. The effectiveness of transportation strategies is dependent on land use decisions—everyone in the state is still working on trying to get it right.

The WTP should show the history [of how transportation system has arrived at this point] and the needs for the system. The WTP should provide parameters to guide the Legislature to the types of project that fit. In other words, the plan should give guidance on what meets the needs of the state. “Legislators will always be legislators” so there will always be earmarks, but the WTP should provide guidance on what the needs are.

Taking care of what we have is the highest priority, though this is not explicit in Thurston’s regional plan. What share of that investment historically has gone to taking care of existing infrastructure? Is that enough - and what may be left to do other things?

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

At the federal level the West Coast Corridor Coalition is usefully demonstrating that west coast freight movement exceeds that of the east coast. The Coalition (Washington, Oregon, and California interests together) has a lot of political clout.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH YAKIMA VALLEY CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENTS (YVCOG)

September 22, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Page Scott, Executive Director YVCOG
Germaine Beveridge, Senior Transportation Planner
Ashley Probart, Association of Washington Cities
Dale Stedman, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Don Whitehouse, Regional Administrator, WSDOT South Central Region
Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dale provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Elizabeth recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Overall, the update process as a data-driven “back up what you say” approach is a step in the right direction.

This update, the role of the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations is less clear (though, in the last update the organizations were “processed to death”). Defining the process and where the RTPOs fit in wasn’t clear.

RTPOs are a regional forum where floating the draft plan by the public is an opportunity.

The WTP funded/unfunded chart has been useful: priorities do have at least some funding. Focus on what’s left to be done.

Top priorities:

- **Preservation**—County roads and bridges, especially short-span bridges and high cost bridges; city roads and bridges, especially small city paving, city maintenance backlog, short-span bridges and high cost bridges. The region also recognizes the importance of funding maintenance of additions to the state highway system
- **Safety**—highway safety, especially behavioral programs to address drunk driving, seatbelt use, and aggressive driving; low-cost safety enhancements on highways; county road safety on two-lane rural roads; high accident locations in cities (on state and local roads); general aviation airport Capital Safety Program to remove air space obstructions.

- Freight Movement—all-weather county road system (weight issues on local roads and bridges are not only an infrastructure issue, but may also involve better enforcement of restrictions); a reliable I-90 Snoqualmie Pass and access to ports and rail facilities are needed; expand Commercial Vehicle Information Systems Networks (CVISN) at weigh stations; provide ongoing funding to specific regional freight projects.
- Bottlenecks—delay at rail crossings primarily in Yakima; seasonal or weekend events cause backups mostly on state highway on- and off-ramps.
- Transportation Access—rural mobility grants; public transportation.
- System Efficiency—basic highway maintenance and traffic operations, especially implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems plan and incident response.
- Health and the Environment—fixing locations with recurring maintenance problems; habitat connectivity; wildlife hazards at general aviation airports.

Policy need: clearly articulate the state's role in intercity bus service, preservation of shortline rail and passenger rail—these would help make the WTP useful. And if there is no role, say so. This policy should be prominent.

Focus in this region on local city and county network—all trips start and end on local roads.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

TransAction group form to bring interests together.

In the mid-valley, a smaller cities tourism compact (including Yakama Nation) addresses access between communities and outlying areas such as wineries.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH SOUTHWEST REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (RTC)

September 22, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Dean Lookingbill, Transportation Director, Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC)

Thayer Rorabaugh, Transportation Manager, City of Vancouver

Mike Williams, WSDOT Southwest Region Planning Office

Bob Distler, Transportation Commissioner

Judy Lorenzo, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dean provided an overview of the RTC's long history as a Metropolitan Planning Organization since 1979, its re-designation as an MPO in 1992, the additional role as an Regional Transportation Planning Organization, added in 1990, and the 2004 legislative direction to expand the Policy Board membership to include state legislators.

Dean provided an orientation to the region using a large map. He described the region's demographics, highlighting that 1/3 of the region's work force commutes to Portland, east-west traffic patterns work pretty good, north-south corridors continue to suffer due to the population growth and increasing demand on the system their biggest issues is "capacity, capacity, capacity." Population growth in the county is creating significant land use issues.

He shared that the City of Vancouver took action to increase their sales tax by 0.2% that is dedicated to transportation investment.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Dean shared that the locals don't own the state highway system so they don't worry about preservation. Safety is always an important issue, but the top three capacity related issues for this region are:

- System Efficiencies
- Bottlenecks and Chokepoints
- Moving Freight

Intelligent Transportation Systems

The RTPPO would like to see more operational analysis on regional arterials. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) is an important issue that the RTPPO is interested in applying national lessons learned to our state for possible efficiency gains. There was mention of a joint committee that is looking at equipment purchases and maintenance of ITS applications and investments.

Growth Management

The Growth Management Act process within this region has evolved over time and the region is currently in its second round of a county-wide GMA process. Through the Bi-State Coordination Committee there is a start for examining how the land use decisions in Clark County interact and impact the Portland region and vice versa. The I-5 Columbia River Crossing is a very important project for the region and specifically to the City of Vancouver. This project is an example of good bi-state conversation.

Rail

In Vancouver the rail lines form a “T-shaped” route, with lines radiating north, south, and east. The confluence at the junction causes significant congestion and delay. Expansion of the existing rail yard has been an ongoing constraint to addressing and exploring changes for West Vancouver’s freight access. There is a new proposal out to increase road and rail capacity for cargo moving into and out of the port. It is hoped that this will result in a reduction of truck traffic on local roads and lessen congestion at a major hub on the West Coast rail corridor. (A handout on this project was provided at the RTPPO meeting.)

A discussion about the details of this project followed leading back to points raised earlier in the meeting:

“What is the state’s role in investing in private sector rail improvements?”

“Is this a regional project or is there a state interest in this issue?”

“Will the Commission’s Rail Study address this type of issue?”

The group also wondered if the increase in gas prices would have a significant impact on barge traffic, but did not speculate on the answer.

Being competitive in the world market is important to this region.

The RTPPO asked, “How do we continue to understand the connections between what is in the WTP and how that relates to getting money?” “What influence do the regions really have?” The project level focus is important to the region. It is what people can identify with.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

The City of Vancouver was very pleased with the contribution that the SW WSDOT Region made to transportation conversations in the region.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH WENATCHEE VALLEY TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (WVTC)

September 22, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Jeff Wilkens, Executive Director, WVTC

Dale Stedman, Washington State Transportation Commissioner

Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dale provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Elizabeth recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Moving away from the WTP containing project lists is the single most important and welcome change from the last update of the WTP.

The WTP funded/unfunded pie charts by WTP issue are a good look at more than WSDOT outcomes of investments.

Maintenance, preservation, and safety are high priorities, in both rural and urban areas.

The real outcome of investment to address congestion is not reduction in delay, but rather economic activity.

Tourism is a big issue in this region—though it may not be the top priority here. US 97 is both a touring route and a freight corridor and it needs improvements that are compatible with both of these demands.

Agriculture is the economic base here, but it has limited growth. Other sectors, e.g., tourism, are increasing and creating employment and population growth in the urban area, which is leading to different infrastructure and transit needs.

I-90 Snoqualmie Pass is important to this region, especially for freight access to and from Puget Sound. US2 Stevens Pass is very important for tourism.

This region favors dedicated capacity for freight movement in Puget Sound and is concerned that general capacity improvements provide only very temporary relief to freight mobility. All-weather county roads, as an area of potential investment, are an issue primarily in Douglas County.

From the trucking association in the area, the most pressing problem is being able to get enough trucks and containers (backhaul), especially refrigerated units for agricultural products.

Rail handles currently only a tiny fraction of the fruit freight in the area, but represents great potential. The region does favor the Fruit Express, but is much more interested in projects like the new Railex Venture in Walla Walla County. The last shortline in the area, Cascade Columbia, may go away—if so the region favors “rail banking” or conversion to trail.

The region needs improved infrastructure at Pangborn Airport to maintain commercial service to the area. The industry-based challenges making commercial service to Wenatchee a serious problem are probably similar in several other mid-sized communities around the state. Solutions are needed. This region believes there is a state interest in working with the air carriers to ensure continued access to regional airports.

Job access for disadvantaged people is important, especially between Wenatchee and Leavenworth. Access for rural residents to medical services/medical care is an issue.

The George Sellar Bridge is a “poster project” for the area as a bottleneck. The real issue is that limited Columbia River crossings are beginning to create significant congestions problems. Levels of service are projected to decline rapidly over the next ten years.

The WTP should lead the regional organizations and WSDOT at a policy level. The Governor’s support will make the WTP meaningful to the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

The regional plan here on identifying issues of common interests for its member jurisdictions.

In the region, the urbanized areas are the hubs of the regional economy—the regional plan considers how to invest in support of economic growth.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH PALOUSE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (PRTPO)

October 6, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Duane Dunford, Whitman County Public Works Director
Joel Ristau, Asotin County Engineer
Mark Storey, Whitman County Engineer
Ken Olson, Executive Director, Palouse RTPO
Steve Watson, Director, Lewis-Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
Dale Stedman, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Don Whitehouse, WSDOT Region Administrator, South Central Region
Jerry Lenzi, WSDOT Region Administrator, Eastern Region
Judy Lorenzo, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dale provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Judy recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials. Most participants were familiar with the materials and thought that the table and the pie charts were very good tools for the conversation and WTP focus.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

The highlights of Modal Directors meeting notes were reviewed:

- Most roads in the Palouse are not all-weather roads. Freight restrictions may last 2.5 months per year. Addressing the needs of all weather roads is the top priority for Whitman County.
- Dredging the Snake River is critical. Barges are going down river partially full and barge lines are operating at a break-even point. "What is the alternative, especially in the winter?" This remains an important region-wide issue.
- Shortline railroads need repair. There are too many miles of track for counties to maintain. Many railroad crossings were built for 1.5-ton trucks. Trucks now carry 22 tons, which is damaging crossings.
- The SR 129 interchange in Asotin County is a choke point, called Fleshman Way. Daily traffic count is 25,000 with many accidents. (Asotin County has completed an alternatives analysis, and a federal funding for a design and PE has been secured. However sources for full funding of the right of way purchase and construction are needed. The project cost is estimated to exceed eight million dollars.)
- Adverse weather capability is needed into the Pullman airport. Flights now are diverted to Lewiston. Whitman County needs a regional route to the airport.
- Continued funding will be needed for public transportation in Clarkston after 2009.

- Small counties can't compete for grants. One problem is that they don't have grant writers. Transit doesn't compete well because of a lack of ridership.
- However, Pullman Transit receives grants. On the negative side buses damage the roadways and the City of Pullman has no provisions for street repair, especially Bishop Avenue.

Shortspan bridges are important in this area.

Safety is also an issue, though they don't know where they would start improving.

A good discussion was held about local paving. In most of the cities and at the county level the annual funding cannot keep pace with the need for repaving. By the time that a portion of the roadways that need repaving get their turn in the rotation, it is farther out that when it would be most cost efficient. This drives spot repair and repaving costs up over the long term.

The new Phase II stormwater treatment regulations are causing some concern in the region. How will they be able to comply by the summer of '07? Stormwater treatment was discussed and the challenges facing implementation in rural areas. There is a tendency to look to the short-term rather than focus on a corridor or long-term approach.

The WTP needs to paint a picture for "the common people." When citizens/voters look at the plan they tend to think "there has to be something in it for me."

Small city paving and safe routes to schools are important issues for this region.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

The question was asked if they had thought about hiring a grant writer. They replied that they would need a source of money to pay the grant writer but occasionally a person in private practice volunteers. They are interested in getting more money.

The County Road Administration Board (CRAB) was discussed. Every county engineer has a different perspective and unique exposure to local issues. They need to show "Olympia" that they are dependable and accountable.

The role of the commission should be one of keeping the legislature aware of the long-term needs of the state versus the reactionary nature of allocating dollars to those with the loudest voice. We need to have a well thought out plan (WTP) and stick to it.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL (PSRC)

October 10, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Bob Drewel, Executive Director PSRC
Charlie Howard, Transportation Planning Director, PSRC
Mike Cummings, Program Manager, PSRC
King Cushman, Regional Strategy Advisor, PSRC
Bob Distler, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Chris Picard, Acting Manager, Urban Planning Office, WSDOT
Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT
Ray Deardorf, Washington State Ferries, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Bob Distler provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Elizabeth recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Transportation investments and decisions should connect to the economy.

The region is looking for ways that it can partner with the Commission, especially to explain the benefits of transportation investments in this region to the rest of the state.

PSRC's plan is closely aligned with the 2005 WTP update, especially for these issues:

- Preservation: concrete pavements; major vulnerable bridges (Alaskan Way Viaduct and SR 520 Floating Bridge); sustainability of the system.
- Chokepoints and Bottlenecks: not all infrastructure—there are operational investment opportunities for roads, rail, ferries, transit; investments in transit where there is already a robust market; support for forms of development that assist or generate transportation efficiency; inadequate street network.
- Freight and Economy: implementation of an economic strategy in support of clusters; a population/jobs imbalance (especially with Kitsap County) in the region creates roads and ferries issues; rail.
- Safety and Security: a “new” area for PSRC, but growing recognition of its importance in the region—the state's highest pedestrian fatality rate is here; WSDOT data has been useful and the region would benefit from more regional-level analysis.
- Transportation Access: Sound Transit Special Needs Working Group formed to begin addressing this issue.

Finance is an important issue. Explain to people what they get for their money—benefits-oriented such as the ferries plan.

WTP should avoid project lists (and therefore disagreements about which projects), although citing really big projects is important.

The Commission may want to pursue as a policy matters:

Initiative process as contrary to long-range thinking and planning.

Anomalies in the Growth Management Act which pit city against city.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

PSRC's Leadership Group formed to examine issues related to the Regional Transportation Investment District.

PSRC's Prosperity Partnership formed to rebuild the region's economic foundations and meet the needs of new economic clusters.

PSRC's Freight Roundtable examines freight mobility issues in the region.

PSRC's regional/metropolitan plan is currently being updated. The region and the plan have more of an external focus than ever before. The plan considers preferred policies on growth, transportation, and economic strategies.

PSRC had no further comments.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH SKAGIT/ISLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (S/I RTPO)

October 11, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Mike Shelton, Commissioner, Island County
Dean Maxwell, Mayor of Anacortes
Kelley Moldstat, Executive Director S/I RTPO
Mike Morton, Transportation Planner for Island County Public Works
Dan Pike, Transportation Director S/I RTPO
Bob Distler, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Elizabeth gave a brief introduction and status of the update process. Bob explained that the WTP is not a “laundry list” of projects but priorities of investment by program areas. What are the state’s priorities and how can they reflect local and regional priorities or interests?

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

There is a need to take care of the “aorta,” or I-5.

Safety and Preservation need to be first, then invest in the Puget Sound region.

Ideally, the Transportation Commission would have authority to pick projects, but the Legislature retains that authority.

Getting rid of binding arbitration for unions would free up money for all investment needs.

Local priorities from RTPO are:

- How to get the gas tax to stick,
- Support business and commerce with infrastructure funding,
- SR 20 in Skagit,
- Sharp’s corner,
- I-5/SR 20 interchange,
- Deception Pass bridge is past its prime,
- North Whidbey Island access,
- Full inter-modal (ferry and train) service between Island County and Olympia and the Legislature
- Keystone/Port Townsend ferry terminal work (need planning funds now to identify a solution for the future which may be built 25-30 years from now).

If more local money was available locals could partner better with WSDOT.

Tri-County connector public transportation has been successful, especially from Bellingham to Mt. Vernon – other “legs” less full. There is lots of rider support, especially given high gas prices. Public transportation is needed to get away from autos – SR 20 needs combination of public transportation and cars to get people on and off island. Public transportation must be reliable, connected, and convenient. Encourage demand response service – use technology as well as “hard” infrastructure like bus shelters.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

RTPO is concerned about I-912 and inter-regional fights for money. Local funding is needed for projects. The system is statewide, yet funding may be more about politics than actual need. Strategic decisions break down when politics drive funding decisions.

Island County has an excellent vanpool service/program. Vanpool priority loading – 12 vans saves two ferry sailings needed if all occupants drove SOVs.

Emergency preparedness – earthquakes, esp. the Ship Canal Bridge. Flooding problem beyond the scale of community – affects I-5, rail, and dikes.

S/I RTPO had no further comments.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH SAN JUAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS (NOT A MEMBER OF AN RTP)

October 12, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Kevin M. M. Ranker, San Juan County Commission Chair
Alan Lichter, San Juan County Commissioner
Bob Myhr, San Juan County Commissioner
Bob Distler, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Ray Deardorf, Washington State Ferries, WSDOT
Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Bob Distler provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Elizabeth recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– SAN JUAN COUNTY COMMISSIONER PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Ferry priorities: service needs to be kept robust and also increased in the San Juan Islands.

Highway 20 is important as a connection between the San Juan Islands and the rest of Washington (through Anacortes). Getting to and from Seattle also is an issue (Memorial Highway to I-5). Bottlenecks in Marysville and Everett impede traffic between Seattle and the San Juan Islands.

The temporary ferry slip in Friday Harbor is important and should be maintained into the future. The second slip in Friday Harbor is recognized as a temporary, but would be needed if service goes to 6 boats per day – intermodal study may recommend this. According to Washington State Ferries, with double lane on- and off-loading it would be possible to add another boat without another slip.

The inter-island ferry service is also important and the schedule needs to be kept as robust as possible. This ferry service is the “glue” of the islands. Because of this, an examination of fares for our local use of this inter-island “road” may be in order to help local workers, farmers, craftsmen get to their vehicles to their jobs within the islands.

Some efficiencies are needed with ferry loading/unloading. In the next decade, we will probably see another vessel added to increase capacity – also terminal improvements. Operations will likely be a bit different allowing for more flexibility and better inter-island connectivity. A growing number of farmers and fisherman move products between islands.

More bike trails, especially on Lopez Island – also separate bikes from roadways on all islands.

(Added after the meeting): Ferry parking is a problem at the Lopez terminal. Land is available. The WTP really needs to make sure that the Washington State Department of Transportation and San Juan County Land Bank work together to solve the parking situation at Upright Head. Earlier discussions have been gone by the wayside. It needs to get back on the front burner.

Encourage use of neighborhood electric vehicles on islands.

Some desire for air connection from islands to SeaTac International airport or other airports. From there one can use public transportation to get to their destination.

We are already at a minimum here. There is no room to cut ANY services without losing routes for kids to get to school, seniors to get to doctors, or farmers to get goods to market.

There is a need for more ferry runs, especially in peak season with extra service. Suggest going to 6 boats peak – 5 off-peak, this would help with business and government scheduling, as well as with individuals.

This area would like to see action from the WTP in the form of Legislative dollars especially in regards to the bottlenecks at Friday Harbor, better flow on Spring Street, and better parking and staging at the ferry docks.

If there were a direct rail link between Bellingham, Mt. Vernon, and Seattle, it would also benefit San Juan residents. Visitors, especially from out of state, need a car now but if better shuttle services were offered they might not need one.

Commuter fare books are also an issue; island residents “can’t give anymore.”

Spring Street is the main tourist-walking route and people don’t want it to be a freeway. An option may be to have vehicles use 8th Street.

Off-island transportation is important, but inter-island is the most important for jobs, schools, and medical appointments.

Managing development is important, especially in Friday Harbor and Lopez Village. Need to keep growth centered and encourage services and housing closer to the urban centers, especially with rising fuel costs.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

Air connections to SeaTac and Boeing Field

Anacortes to British Columbia ferry run

Alternative fuels for ferries

San Juan potentially joining an RTPO.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH QUAD-COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (QUADCO)

October 14, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Joy Potter, Lead Agency, Kittitas County
Paul Bennett, Public Works Director, Lincoln County
Todd O'Brien, Public Works Director, Adams County
Gerry McFaul, PE, Moses Lake City Engineer and QUADCO Chair
Derek Pohle, Director of Public Works, Grant County
Scott Bradshaw, Director of Public Works, Kittitas County
Dale Stedman, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Don Senn, Regional Administrator, North Central Region, WSDOT
Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dale summarized Transportation Commission structure, studies, and teams, and Elizabeth gave a brief status of the WTP update process.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

The region didn't get anything out of the 2003 package, and not much in the 2005 package. The majority of projects are line-itemed. Fear that locals may not get what they would hope for. Locals may not compete well for funding when there is line-iteming.

This RTPO is unique in that it is a "loose confederation" of counties with little common ground except for I-90 and Snoqualmie Pass. Agriculture and rail may be other areas of common ground.

This region has a priority for a core all-weather system. It also needs funds for local preservation such as roads, bridges, and chip-seals. There is a need for dedicated city preservation funds.

There is a need for bringing roads (width) up to standards. Focus needed on preservation and safety.

Desire to stick with a programmatic approach – suits the local agencies best. Irrked by spending money studying things rather than fixing them.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

No construction funds are distributed through QUADCO, except for federal enhancement funding. They have the lowest overhead of the RTPOs.

The increasingly visible "Cascade Curtain" separating eastern and western Washington is an issue for this region in obtaining funding.

Need to solve the revenue issue to avoid becoming “Balkanized” (that is each county just keeping the taxes raised in that county).

Concern that the eastern Washington legislators must realize that saying “no” to generating revenue will keep them away from the table of receiving project funding.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH THE TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (TTPO)

October 17, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

The Tribal Transportation Planning organization listening session was held in conjunction with the State WSDOT Tribal Conference. Approximately 42 individuals participated in this event, which included representatives from tribal, federal, state and private organizations. Washington State Transportation Commissioners Dan O'Neal, Dale Stedman, Bob Distler, Dick Ford, and Ed Barnes attended.

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Colleen Jollie, WSDOT Tribal Liaison, gave a presentation on the findings of the Tribal Transportation Survey that was conducted by the Tribal Transportation Planning Organization. Dale Stedman gave a brief explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the Washington State Transportation Commission especially as it relates to the WTP.

– TTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

- The clearest and strongest message came as a wrap-up to the session when David Frey made the wrap-up pitch for the strong need for transportation planning positions at tribal offices and the commissioners' commitment to keep that element in the plan to support the tribes in their pursuit of administrative capacity.
- The tribes are very interested in having an increasing level of staff support from WSDOT, not only to deal with the BIA roads inventory, but as an ongoing commitment to assist in their planning.
- One attendant applauded the Washington Transportation Commission on its support and including administrative planning capacity for each tribal government as a proposed targeted area for investment. Planning capacity is critical to each tribe because if there is no staff to participate in the process, funding of tribal transportation needs does not occur. WSDOT's federal liaison should be able to take this message back to Washington, D.C.
- The lack of an accurate needs inventory for tribal land is costing the tribes millions of dollars for transportation improvements.
- Desire to form partnerships with WSDOT and local agencies to maximize limited funding for transportation projects.
- At least one tribe is planning a major development that will require an interchange. This will require the Tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the County, WSDOT and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) to plan, program and fund the project.
- One attendee mentioned the need for tribal governments to have access to the "Safe Routes to Schools" program.
- Another attendee mentioned that his tribe is very small and the staff wears many hats.
- One tribe has participated in the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation and has developed many good partnerships with other

governments in the area in order to provide transportation opportunities for tribal members.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

- There was also a comment on the difficulties an individual has experienced in working with the BIA Indian reservation roads inventory process.
- One tribal member pointed out that his tribe needed Homeland Security funds to ensure that access was provided to the Coast Guard Station located on his reservation.
- A comment was made that the transit agency in one county did not adequately coordinate their schedule with the Tribe.
- A tribal member commented that if the Indian reservation roads inventory were accurate, additional funds would come to the tribes that could be used to partner with the state.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH COWLITZ-WAHKIAKUM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (CWCOG)

October 20, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Steve Harvey, Director, CWCOG

Rosemary Siipola, Transportation Planner/Manager, CWCOG

Vicki Cummings, Executive Director, Grays Harbor Council of Governments

Dale Stedman, Washington State Transportation Commissioner

Don Wagner, Regional Administrator, WSDOT Southwest Region

Bob Jones, Transportation Planning Manager, WSDOT Olympic Region

Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dale Stedman provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Elizabeth recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

The region requests of the Commission to include or become more aware of a bottleneck: I-5 from Grand Mound (Exit 88) to Rush Road (Exit 72). This is the region's top priority. Part of the issue is developing an arterial system for redundancy during emergencies.

Stabilizing Amtrak funding is important.

The region needs a third rail track from Kelso (Rocky Point) to Martin's Bluff, and this should be included in an update of the state's rail plan and the Commission's rail study. The region looks forward to understanding the state's commitment to rail.

A region priority is modernizing the existing rail system, both the mainline rail and access to I-5. In Grays Harbor, a loop rail at the port would help avoid backups onto arterials and neighborhood streets.

The region needs more rail capacity and needs state partnership to help leverage 20-50% private investment, which translates to jobs.

Because the roads (state and local) channel all the freight and visitors, there are safety and freight issues—need intermittent passing lanes, especially on SR 4, SR 6, and US 12. The region would like the state to develop a passing lane policy for rural roads.

Siting an airport is getting ever more difficult. Lewis County could be a regional hub to connect to SeaTac International Airport. (The region is participating in the general aviation airport capacity study.)

Don't exclude rural communities from consideration.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

Agriculture and tourism are the main bases of the region's economy.

Mainline railroad, Interstate 5, and the Columbia River all converge here.

The Port of Grays Harbor is the only ocean-going port in Washington. (This is included in WTP freight paper's "global gateways" section).

The region absorbs overflow development from Portland, Oregon, and from Vancouver (Clark County).

The region has invested heavily in traffic modeling, and its planning efforts lead to projects to make the existing system work better. "Everything we do is related to economic or community development."

The RTPPO would like to be the resource that WSDOT offices use to reach local jurisdictions, especially on grant program outreach, both to assist their members and to ensure regional coordination/consistency with the regional plan.

The region finds that there is poor communication about grant programs. As an example – Safe Routes to Schools – the region could not obtain clear information about school walkway plans.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH PENINSULA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (PENINSULA RTPO)

October 21, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Mike Chapman, Clallam County Commissioner and Executive Council Chair, Peninsula RTPO

Dan O'Neal, Washington State Transportation Commissioner

Dale Stedman, Washington State Transportation Commissioner

Randy Hain, Regional Administrator

Bob Jones, Transportation Planning Manager, Peninsula RTPO

George Kovich, Olympic Region

Patrick Babineau, Peninsula RTPO Coordinator, WSDOT

Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Dale Stedman provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Elizabeth recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Key regional issues:

- Replacing the east half of the Hood Canal Bridge is the region's top priority.
- Safety—paramount issue—passing lanes; freight-recreational traffic conflicts; county road links to highways.
- Preserving and maintaining the system.
- Improving Peninsula links primarily on US 101, SR 104, and SR 3—flooding and landslides; seasonal tourist traffic.
- Freight mobility—passing/climbing lanes, truck pullouts.
- Better partnerships—WTP should encourage coordination and cooperation with internal and neighboring rural areas in competing for funding, grants, and project prioritization against urban areas.
- Adequate funding for rural transit agencies and special needs transportation.
- Regional economy—from resource-based to tourism and retirement industry; access to employment centers and services; conflicts between trucks and recreational vehicles (as above in Safety).

Funding is needed for regional corridor studies not just point studies (current planning funding is inadequate.) Legislatively picked studies may be hit-or-miss; need a funding source to produce a better plan for the entire system in the region.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

Changes in the economy of the region: timber “decline”—in Clallam County alone, timber taxes in the late 1980s were around \$10-12 million per year; the late 1990s they were

down to around \$4 million per year; now around only \$100,000 per year. "Not even a budget item any more."

The Peninsula RTPO is progressing on its top work effort of a legislative outreach process to communicate with legislators on the region's key issues and priorities. This communication process includes meeting prior to 2006 legislative session to discuss the region's top priorities and expanding its outreach effort for the '07-'09 legislative session.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH WHATCOM COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (WCOG)

October 24, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Bob Ryan, Chair, Whatcom Council of Governments
Pete Kremen, Whatcom County Executive
Jim Miller, Executive Director of WCOG
Gordon Rogers, Deputy Director/Director of Planning, WCOG
Bob Distler, Washington State Transportation Commissioner
Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Bob Distler provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked the participants in advance for their time. Elizabeth recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

While recognizing the need for investments in the Puget Sound region, this region needs transportation investments, particularly capacity needs. There is inadequate infrastructure for the existing population. And, this county's population is growing, leading to more congestion.

Improvements at the border here serve the entire state.

State highways and county roads are carrying much of the truck traffic which is funneled through the county southward. The growth in truck traffic is about 7% per year.

A county all-weather roads program would be useful in this region.

This organization prefers the WTP to include project listings, and has collaborated with its members and with WSDOT to develop relevant projects and priorities. Examples include: the last third of the Guide Meridian to the border, deficient and obsolete I-5 on/off ramps. This region feels that with too broad or programmatic an approach, the project priorities chosen by the Legislature may not be relevant to the region.

Priorities include:

- Safety is the highest priority, but use input (projects) from WCOG
- Fix what's already broken or failing
- Border issues
- Reduce congestion
- All-weather county roads
- Shoulders on state and county roads for safety, including bicycle safety
- Third Amtrak *Cascades* train service

Access to transit is an issue in Bellingham—growing problem as population grows here.

Using waterways in transportation is a growing interest (“where we started”)—short-sea shipping will face a policy issue and the need to use private ports rather than public ports because of union issues.

Because of the growing use of the airport at Abbotsford, BC, the region will see more truck traffic on the Guide Meridian and other highways.

– OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED

In recent years WCOG and Whatcom County have been aggressive in pursuing state and federal funding for projects. The County sees a low investment return on revenue generated (61¢ per \$1 raised at the state level, and the county is a donor at the federal level too.) The “Canadian myth”—taxes on purchases made by visitors to the county don’t offset needed funding for inadequate infrastructure.

SAFETEA-LU Coordinated Borders Program: Whatcom’s proposal is to use a similar formula in the state as was used to allocate the program nationwide. That is, area borders generate about 75% of the border traffic and should receive a commensurate share of the state’s program.

WCOG had no further comments.

WTP COMMISSION TEAM VISIT WITH BENTON-FRANKLIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (BFCG)

October 25, 2005

– PARTICIPANTS

Mark Kushner, Transportation Director, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments
Carol Moser, Richland – Chair, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments, PAC
Dale Stedman, Commissioner, Washington State Transportation Commission
Don Whitehouse, South Central Region Administrator, WSDOT
Bill Preston, Transportation Planning Manager, South Central Region, WSDOT
Judy Lorenzo, HQ Planning Office, WSDOT (via phone)

– BRIEF STATUS OF THE WTP UPDATE

Following introductions Mark provided a region orientation of communities. He presented RTPO size, geography, demographics, etc. He mentioned that the ports in the region are very active in the RTPO, most have airports, several have barges for moving grain and there is a lot of rail activity. The river dredging issue is important to this area. There are also a few transportation pipelines located in the region.

Rail lines – some of the rail tracks are actually gone. Don Whitehouse asked about the red rail lines annotated on a wall map. Mark explained the challenges of railroad abandonment, and the Rails-to-Trails process, concluding the chance of reactivating rail service on these lines is very minimal.

Hanford has 15,000 workers and is the major employer in the area. Workers are doing cleanup after the war effort. The federal government is the largest employer in the region. Mark identified traffic patterns, roadway, and freight movements along the region's transportation corridors as a result of this localized large employer and the private sector support industries.

Dale provided an overview of the meeting purpose and thanked Mark and the group for their time in advance. Judy recapped the WTP process and referred to the handout materials.

– RTPO PERSPECTIVES ON THE WTP

Mark shared that there are things outside the RTPO that are important to the region's livelihood – light density lines, rail lines, inland corridors, key highway routes, nine grade crossings in the urban area, dredging the Columbia and Snake rivers, Ellensburg to Lind is still a proposal being considered, future Amtrak service, SR 395, and I-90 Snoqualmie Pass.

A discussion followed about the summary of the handout titled "Highlights of Modal Directors Meeting in 2004." The following summary points are important issues within the Benton-Franklin RTPO:

- In regards to Transportation Access, elderly and those without access to transportation present a challenge. Demand response is being addressed in the Tri-City area.
- It was mentioned there is a belief (real or perceived) in cities and counties that WSDOT doesn't care about cities or counties. Hard feelings exist over the 2003 package that was given to WSDOT when cities and counties also have needs.
- A problem exists in getting 10,000–12,000 Hanford employees to work at the same time. People are spread out over a 50-mile radius.
- In regards to Health and Obesity it was recommended that WSDOT look for nontraditional funding sources. If there is no new money, "don't rob from other funding sources."
- In regards to Commute Trip Reduction, it is not understood in the Tri-City area what the impacts of the new legislation and ideas shared at the August 30, 2005, Coordinating Committee meeting will be.
- In regards to freight several issues are:
 - Snake River Dams must remain in place for barge traffic – very important to us.
 - \$60 million is needed for at-grade railroad crossings in the Tri-City area.
 - Some rail restrictions are limit to 10 MPH speed limits because of bad tracks.
 - Shortline railroads are deteriorating due to bad roadbeds, crossing, and spurs.
- The comments by Secretary MacDonald "There is a growing recognition that there is a transportation financial crisis at the local level" were appreciated by BFCG.

Then the conversation shifted to the regional priorities:

TOP PRIORITY - All Weather Roads - Mark stated that all-weather roads are the highest priority. *"Without these roads our economy is shut down for months."* Seasonal weight restrictions – most of the trips go through a city. Dale indicated that those issues that will probably rise to the top are the ones that connect to multiple areas of the nine issue points.

Economy and Freight – of high interest

Interested in funding this as opposed to being tied to a congestion related project. I-90 is a good example of a project that this RTPO supports. It's linked to our economy too.

Mark led a discussion referencing the funded/unfunded table handout. The discussion focused on expanding its selected rows or areas of targeted investments, highlighting the RTPO priorities, and positions on key items.

PRESERVATION - Row 18 – Public Transportation

Transit system preservation such as transit bus replacement and park & ride lots. The RTPO was very pleased to see that this program got funding.

PRESERVATION - Row 19 & 20 – The table looks like there isn't a need for additional local roadway funding. That's not the case for this region.

PRESERVATION - Rows 25 & 26 – The RTPPO was pleased that the county road safety and city street safety received funding.

SYSTEM EFFICIENCY - Row 45 & 46 – Amtrak *Cascades* passenger service
Is this area related to only north-south routes or will it included east-west routes? If it is focused on only north-south, the RTPPO requests the plan consider expansion to include the east-west.

SYSTEM EFFICIENCY - Row 48 – The RTPPO agrees that Commute Trip Reduction is important

BOTTLENECKS AND CHOKEPOINTS - Row 51 - Urban Corridor Program for Cities and Counties (connecting urban area corridors that span several jurisdictions). The RTPPO feels this is important, and that the plan should communicate the need for additional funding.

MOVING FREIGHT - Row 54 - In the table the RTPPO and the South-Central WSDOT Region noticed that the numbers reflected for the I-90 project were not correct. The revised text below has been added to the current version of the funded/unfunded table.

Reduce severe weather closures on major east-west highway freight corridors: Improve I-90 at Snoqualmie Pass to reduce avalanche closures, Hyak to Keechelus Dam funded	\$387 million Total cost for the project ranges from 850 million to 1.2 billion	Remaining funding to complete the project	Ranges from \$463 to \$813 million
---	--	---	------------------------------------

MOVING FREIGHT - Row 58 – Creating an ongoing, appropriate level of funding for regional economic development freight projects: FMSIB account established with ongoing funding to address some needs; current FMSIB project list funded. The RTPPO is glad this is included in the funding and identified as an ongoing need.

MOVING FREIGHT - Row 60 -Need secured dollars to create a core county all-weather-road system to minimize the economic impacts of freeze and thaw related road closures for freight dependent industries.

MOVING FREIGHT -Row 66 - Railroads—Mainline Commission Rail Capacity Study will review the relationship between freight and passenger rail capacity on the I-5 rail corridor and support growth in east-west mainline rail capacity and port- rail connections, and preserve rail yards in metro areas. The RTPPO is pleased to see this study underway and requests that it address the east-west capacity issue.

– RECAP OF ANY FOLLOW-UP REQUESTS

WSDOT should try creating a pie that reflects the city and county needs. All the needs from the nine issues that the cities care about are grouped together. (Carol)

Judy asked Mark and Carol to share what they thought the WTP should be, how it should be written to reflect issues that are important to the region. “What are your top policy ideas to include in the plan?” Mark and Carol agreed to think further on that and share additional insight with WSDOT and the Commission.

Provide the RTPPO with additional Rail Study information. (Mark)

Judy agreed to follow-up on refining information contained in the funded/unfunded table specifically –

PRESERVATION - Row 19 & 20 – The table looks like there isn’t a need for additional local roadway funding. That’s not the case for this region.

HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT -Row 83 -The RTPPO would like additional information on the Diesel Retrofit Program or activity.

MOVING FREIGHT - Row 63 – Pipeline - Create fuel pipeline capacity and distribution alternatives to meet Washington’s long-term demand: \$75,000 study needed to analyze constraints and remove obstructions to fuel distribution alternatives. What is this item? The RTPPO would like additional information on this.

MOVING FREIGHT - Row 68 – The RTPPO would like additional information on this area that received funding. What is this about and how can their region benefit?

Support Washington's Agribusiness: Phase I— Refrigerated rail car program (reserve rail cars for meeting peak season agricultural demand)	\$1 million capital (federal) \$250,000 operating (state)
---	--

ECONOMY - Row 77 - Events of statewide significance – this section needs some rewording. (Revisions are underway)

BUILDING FUTURE VISIONS - Row 87 - State highway system extension and corridor expansion seems too vague. The RTPPO wants to know what the funding estimates include, and if it contains anything in the region.

ATTACHMENTS

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS IN WASHINGTON (RCW 47.80)

WHAT IS AN RTPO?

A Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) is formed through a voluntary association of local governments within a county or contiguous counties. RTPO members include cities, counties, WSDOT, tribes, ports, transportation service providers, private employers and others.

WHY WERE RTPOS CREATED?

RTPOs were authorized as part of the 1990 Growth Management Act to ensure local and regional coordination of transportation plans.

WHICH COUNTIES PARTICIPATE IN RTPOS?

There are 14 RTPOs covering 38 of the 39 counties in Washington. San Juan County is not a member of any RTPO.

WHAT DO RTPOS DO?

RTPO planning must involve cities, counties, WSDOT, transit agencies, ports, and private employers. Among other duties, individual RTPOs may perform to serve their membership, RTPOs are **required** to:

- ✓ Prepare a Regional Transportation Plan
- ✓ Certify that countywide planning policies and the transportation element of local comprehensive plans are consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan
- ✓ Develop and maintain a six-year Regional Transportation Improvement Program

HOW ARE RTPOS DIFFERENT THAN METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS (MPO)?

RTPO

- Created by **state** legislation (GMA) and supported by **state** funding
- Covers **both urban and rural** areas

MPO

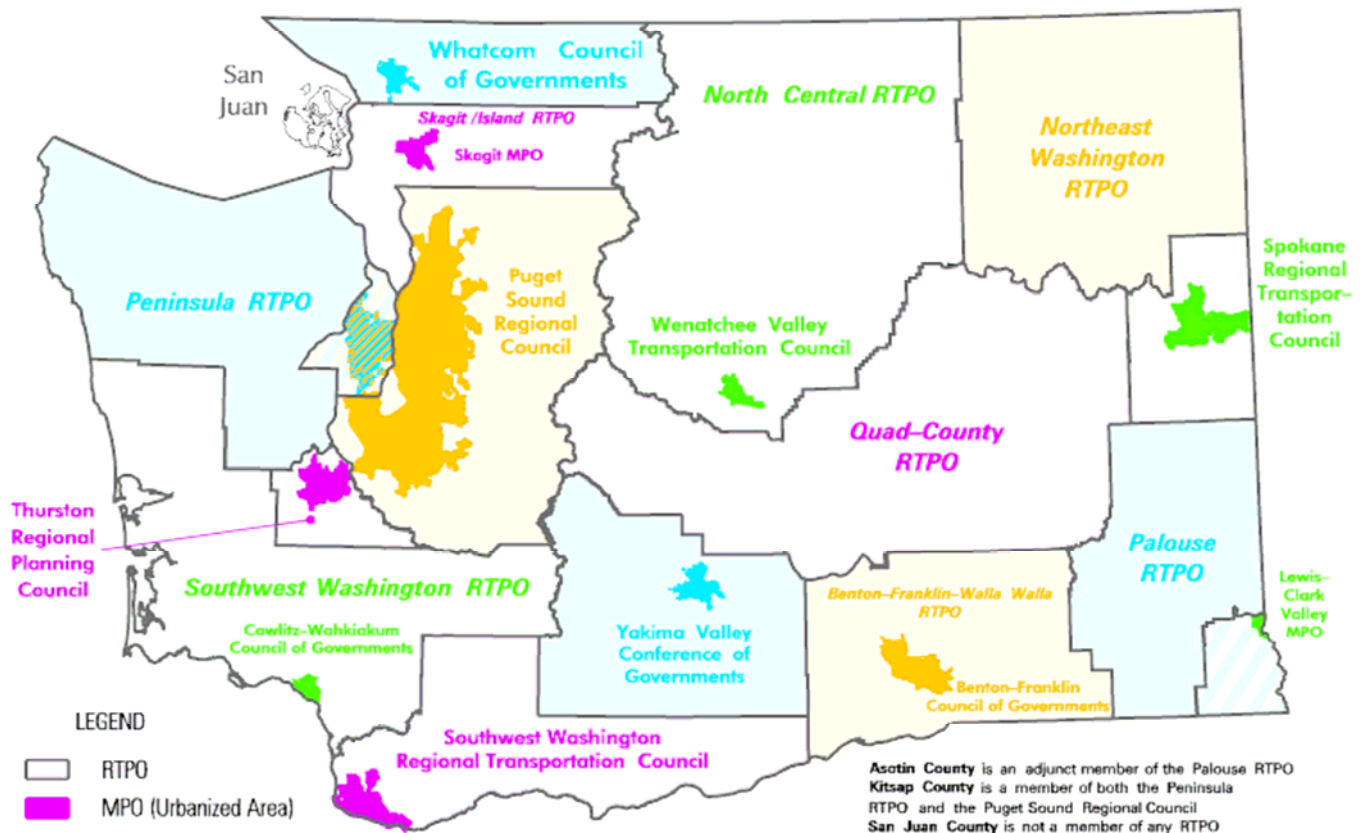
- Created by **federal** legislation and supported by **federal** funding
- Covers **urbanized areas**

MPOs and RTPOs serve the same basic transportation planning functions – develop a long-range plan, coordinate within a region, and prepare a transportation improvement program. The federal MPO and state RTPO requirements of these organizations are complementary. The lead agency for an RTPO is also the lead agency for the MPO within the region (except Lewis-Clark Valley MPO because it is a bi-state organization).

WHAT IS THE WSDOT'S ROLE WITH RTPOS?

WSDOT provides administrative and technical assistance, supports RTPO coordination activities, and actively participates in the regional transportation planning process.

Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organizations



Regional Transportation Planning Organizations in Washington (MPO lead agency)

Benton-Franklin-Walla Walla RTPO (BFCG) – Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties

www.benton-franklin.cog.wa.us

(509) 943-9185

North Central RTPO (WVTC) – Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan Counties

www.wvtc.org

(509) 663-9059

North East Washington RTPO – Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens Counties

www.teddonline.com

(509) 684-4571

Palouse RTPO – Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman Counties

www.palouse.org

(509) 751-9144

Peninsula RTPO – Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, and Mason Counties

www.wsdot.wa.gov/partners/prtpo

(360) 357-2600

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) – King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties

www.psrc.org

(206) 464-7090

Quad County RTPO – Lincoln, Adams, Grant, and Kittitas Counties

Kittitas County Public Works Dept (lead agency)

(509) 962-7523

Skagit-Island RTPO (SMPO) – Skagit and Island Counties

www.scog.net

(360) 416-7877

Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (SWRTC) – Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties

www.rtc.wa.gov

(360) 397-6067

Southwest Washington RTPO (CWCOG) – Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Lewis, Pacific, and Grays Harbor Counties

www.cwcog.org

(360) 577-3041

Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) – Spokane County

www.srtc.org

(509) 343-6370

Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) – Thurston County

www.trpc.org

(360) 786-5480

Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) – Whatcom County

www.wcog.org

(360) 676-6974

Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) – Yakima County

www.yvcog.org

(509) 574-1550

For more information: visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/ppsc/planning/ or call (360) 705-7962